

Duxbury dogs get their day

Duxbury Beach

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Beach access group persuades selectmen to drop 3-month ban

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For The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — The dogs of Duxbury finally had their day.

Three months after the selectmen barred dogs from the town beach, the board reversed the ban last night.

The selectmen approved a set of rules governing dogs on the beach that replaces the ban. The rules were drafted by the Duxbury Beach Reservation Trust, which owns the beach, and the Beach Access Rights Committee, a group formed to fight the ban.

According to the new rules, a special permit will be required for all dogs on the beach. The dogs will have to be "leashed and under immediate and effective control" of their handlers at all times.

Dogs will be allowed on the beach from 8 a.m. to sunset only.

The permits will be free. Dog owners can apply for them at town hall. Only licensed dogs will be eligible.

Any dog owner who fails to follow the rules will lose the permit for the year and may be fined.

Al Vautrineau of the Duxbury Beach Reservation Trust said dog owners "must abide by the rules, or we will have to revoke the program."

After two piping plovers were killed by a vehicle last year, the state pressured Duxbury to strengthen its beach policies concerning dogs and cars. Piping plovers are an endangered species of sea bird that nests on Duxbury Beach during the spring and summer.

Responding to the pressure, the Beach Reservation, a nonprofit group that owns Duxbury Beach and leases it to the town, asked the selectmen to pass the ban.

Dog owners, led by Nancy Day of Duxbury, formed the Beach Access Rights Committee, which is known by its acronym BARC, to combat the ban.

BARC circulated a petition and placed advertisements in local newspapers. Earlier this month, it staged a highly-publicized dog walk protest on the beach. More than 120 dogs with their owners attended the protest, attracting attention from all over the state.

Soon after the protest, Day and other BARC members met with the technical committee of the Beach Reservation to negotiate a compromise.

"We presented them with a proposal ... to help enforce the existing leash law," Day said. "They took that and made it into something that they thought would work."

The state Department of Environmental Protection gave its blessing to the new rules, Vautrineau said.

Day asked that dog owners be vigilant and help the town enforce the rules.

The vote to reverse the dog ban was unanimous.

Before voting on the compromise, Selectman Andre Martecchini said, "I would like to commend the BARC group. This was an opportunity for people to do something. Instead of just complaining, you did something about it. This was the right way to do it."